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The Destruction of Sodom improved, as a
Warning to GREAT-BRITAIN.

A
S E R M O N

PREACHED on the

FAST-DAY,

Friday, February 6, 1756.

A T

Hanover-Street, Long-Acre.

By the Rev. Dr. ALLEN,
Morning Preacher there.

Published at the Request of the Congregation.

L O N D O N :

Printed for A. MILLAR, at Buchanan's Head in
the Strand; and J. & S. JOHNSON, at the
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The Definition of God as improved, and
Worship in Great-Britain.

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GENESIS XIX. 14.

And Lot went out and spake unto his sons in law, which married his daughters, Up, get ye out of this place; for the Lord will destroy this city: but he seemed as one that mocked to his sons in law.

THE history to which these words belong is as follows: Lot, the brother's son of Abraham, had for some time dwelt with his family in Sodom; the inhabitants of which city, together with those of the neighbouring Gomorrah, were become infamous for their wickedness. It is said ch. xiii. 13. that the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly. The country round about it is described as particularly fine and fruitful, well watered every where,

even as the garden of the Lord. ver. 10. and (what has been too common thro' all ages and nations) the plenty and affluence which Providence had blest them with, had been abused to licentiousness, and corrupted their manners. Ezek. xvi. 49, 50. *This was the iniquity of Sodom, pride, fullness of bread, and abundance of idleness was in her and her daughters, neither did she strengthen the hand of the poor and needy; they were haughty and committed abominations before the Lord, and among the rest the abomination which has ever since taken its name from this vile place. For this God had determined to destroy this city, and to do it by such an awful act of vengeance as should be a warning to all the world of his displeasure against such sins. Jude 7. Sodom and Gomorrah, and the cities about them, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth as an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire, a fire miraculously from heaven, which brought absolute and irreparable Destruction on those cities and their inhabitants.*

But Lot not having been a partaker with them in their sins, probably having born his testimony against them, the Almighty designed to save him from the intended ruin: For this purpose he sends him two angels, to let him know what the divine determination was, and to order him to fly with his sons, sons in law, and whatever else belonged

to him out of the devoted place. Lot, not being disobedient to the divine summons, resolves to fly; and out of affection to his family, and those who were, or were likely to be connected with it, he gives to them the needful warning. *Lot went out and spake to his sons in law, and said, Up, get ye out of this place, for the Lord will destroy this city.* No doubt he gave them an account of what the angels had said in the last night's conversation, and urged their speedy removal in the most pressing terms, but the history tells us, *that he seemed to his sons in law as one that mocked.*

The meaning of which expression is not they thought he had a mind to impose on them, and fill them with apprehensions for which he himself knew there was no foundation; from his general character, and their own connexions with him, they had reason to think him incapable of *mocking them* in this sense; but they imagined he had filled his own mind with terrors that were only visionary; a destruction by fire from heaven was a thing so much out of the common course of nature, that they thought there could be nothing at all in it. 'Tis likely his words *seemed to them* (as is said on another occasion) *as idle tales*, and he *seemed to them as one that mocked* in endeavouring to possess them with the belief of things which were only the effects of dotage and

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an old man's credulity ; probably they turned the whole story into ridicule, and made it the jest of the next company they went into.

But was there any ground for treating the affair in such a manner? 'Twas certainly a very serious thing: If there was the least degree of likelihood that such a judgment might befall the city, it was the most terrible judgment that could be well conceived. The danger, if there was danger at all, was imminent, and the judgment would soon begin its operation. He who gave them the warning was a man of probity, had an affection for them, and nothing so much as a desire to save their lives could move him to do what he did: Besides, if Sodom was so full of abominations, and there was a God in heaven who saw and resented them, this might readily induce them to pay some regard to Lot's attestation; an attestation confirmed by the signal act of power which the angels had exerted just before, that I mean of striking blind the men of the city who had gathered about Lot's house to demand his guests in order to *abuse them*. They who had done this were able to do more, and the sons in law of Lot ought to have considered it as a solemn prognostic that the ruin with which the city was threatened would soon follow.

How

How is their contempt of Lot's declaration to be accounted for? Surely Lot's having given, or designing to give them his daughters in marriage, will not suffer us to suppose that they were sunk as deeply in abominations as the rest of the city; but, supposing the best; many who are not grossly bad, are not every thing they ought to be; being young, it is not unlikely they had fallen in with many of the gayeties of the place, and being enervated by plenty, ease and indolence, they would not believe a fact they were so unwilling should be true; buoyed themselves up with a notion that what had so little natural probability, and of which there appeared no present sign or token, would never come to pass: Accordingly, treating the warning with contempt, they staid in Sodom, suffered Lot with his wife and daughters to go without them, and they shared the fate of that wicked place, which after slighting such a friendly warning they well deserved to do.

The text and the history it belongs to will naturally lead our thoughts to several useful observations: such as—That the Almighty is highly displeased with all sin, in proportion as the wickedness of men become great and general the divine resentment of it is heightened, and severe will be the vengeance he will take, unless repentance prevent

prevent it. — That provoking as all sin is to God, he bears a great while with sinners, and is not speedy in executing his deserved wrath upon them. — That in great goodness to mankind God commonly raises up persons who shall give to sinners warning of the danger they are in. — In whatever way God is pleased to give warning to sinners, to those warnings it behoves them to attend with great seriousness. — That it is but too common for sinners to slight things in which they have the nearest concern. — But that lastly, Whoever slights the warnings which God is pleased to give, will find the neglect to end fatally for themselves.

These observations I shall open and illustrate with all the conciseness I am able, and then endeavour to improve them so as to suit the purposes of this day's solemn assembling.

1. I would observe, that the great God is highly displeased with all sin, and in proportion as the sins of men are great and general his resentment is heightened, and severe will be the vengeance which he will take if repentance prevent it not. As to the truth of the fact, that God is displeased with sin, it is as evident as that he is a pure and holy Being, and that he exercises any moral government over his reasonable creatures. Sin is a virtual insult upon all the per-

perfections of the Godhead: 'Tis a contempt of his power who hath forbidden it, and provoking the Lord to jealousy, as if we were stranger than he: 'Tis an inversion of the order he has established in the moral world, and an impeachment of the wisdom by which that order was settled; 'tis an ungrateful requital of the divine Goodness to which we all owe so many obligations, and in every view, it is the abominable thing which God's soul hates: *Fools make a mock at sin*; but none of the sons of men can conceive how odious it is to the pure eyes of God's holiness: We have an early instance and memorial of the abomination of sin to the Almighty, in that we find the first and original sin of the two heads of the human race brought the sad entail of death and misery on all their unborn posterity: and earlier yet, *God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness, to be reserved unto judgment.* 2 Pet. ii. 4. And if sin is so displeasing to God; in proportion as it becomes great and general in the earth must his displeasure at it be heightened: Accordingly we find that when all Flesh had corrupted their way, and the world was sunk into a state of general depravity, God is represented as so grieved at it, that *he repented he had made man*; and in his displeasure brought a flood on the earth that destroyed

all mankind except the righteous Noah and his family; and in the case of Sodom which was destroyed by fire from heaven, the reason of that awful procedure of Providence was because *the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah was great, and their sin was grievous.* We are sunk into an age that is far gone in attempts to confound and level all the great distinctions between good and evil. Vice and wickedness in our refined times have been taken under the patronage and shelter of a set of philosophers, who tell us that good and evil are equally indifferent and equally necessary: But Providence has always taken care to confute these impious maxims and always will: There is a *woe* denounced against those who *call good evil, and evil good,* and they are spoken of as doing the same thing as if they *put darkness for light, and light for darkness, bitter for sweet, and sweet for bitter,* *Is. v. 20.* How happy is it that men's consciences are too hard for all their philosophy: The God *within* ever frowns upon men's wickedness; a sure sign that the God *without* and the God *above* does the same: sinners always feel an inward remorse and compunction in proportion to the sense they have of violating the law of God written in their hearts: In the Scripture the displeasure of God against sin is written as with the pen of a diamond. There we see sins and judgments following each

each other as the shadow does the substance, or any effect its natural cause. In the calamities and troubles which God has brought upon people, sin is generally represented there as the deserving and procuring cause; *men's wickedness corrects them, and their backslidings reprove them*; and if they are not brought to repentance and a better mind, the Scriptures tell us of an awful future state in which the wrath of God against sin, and the dreadful consequences are to be felt for ever.

II. I observe that, provoking as all sin is to almighty God, he bears long with sinners, and is not speedy in executing his deserved wrath upon them: we have a proof of this in the manner of God's dealing with the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah. *Their cry came up before the Lord, for their sin was grievous*. Their provocations were flagrant, and none of them could be hid from his all-seeing eyes; but he is represented as sending down (by his angels) to know whether their sins were as great as the cry spoke them to be. The almighty speaks after the manner of men: *Sending down to know* was an act that would take up some time; and this way of representing the divine conduct is designed to express God's lenity and patience; nay to give us the strongest idea of this, Abraham is represented

sented as intreating repeatedly for Sodom, and God, on his intercession, brings the terms of his mercy so low, as to promise to spare the city, if so many as ten righteous men could be found in it.

The same lenity of God appeared to the old world, on which the patience of God waited the many years in which Noah was preparing the ark, and by that action as well as by being a preacher of righteousness was giving them warning. How long did he bear with his backsliding people Israel? with what reluctance does he bring the judgments upon them which were most necessary for their correction and punishment: after repeated warnings by the mouths of his prophets, all given with too little efficacy, he at last sent his son, who came to his own and his own received him not; and even when by their rejection of him they had filled up the measure of their iniquity, and were ripe for vengeance, incarnate mercy in the person of Jesus weeps over a city that it could not save. *Luke xix. 41—44.* *And when he came near, he beheld the city and wept over it, saying, if thou hadst known, even thou at least in this thy day, the things which belong to thy peace; but now they are hid from thy eyes: For the days shall come upon thee that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee on every side, and shall lay thee even with*

with the ground, and thy children within thee, and they shall not leave within thee one stone upon another, because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation. God seldom brings judgments on sinners, whether nations or individuals, before they are quite incorrigible, and he hath given them abundant testimonies that he is long-suffering towards them, and not willing they should perish but come to repentance.

III. It may be observed as an instance of the goodness of God, that he seldom fails to raise up persons who shall give warning to sinners of the destruction which is likely to come upon them. The old world had a Noah, who by the example of his righteous life, his preaching, and his long employment in preparing the ark to save himself and his household, gave them warning. Sodom had her Lot, a man who was no partaker in her sins, and in all probability bore his testimony against them. His exhortation to his sons in law was very serious and earnest; 'tis very likely he had not been slack in his remonstrances to the inhabitants in general, and that what he says to his sons in law was to express his concern for them, when his warnings to the city were become quite ineffectual, and when he was obliged to give them up in despair of doing them any further service. God hath never left himself

himself without a witness among mankind. In every age there have been men who have stood up for God, and endeavoured to stem the tide of the general impiety of the times they have lived in. All down the ages of the jewish church he raised up one prophet after another, who *cry'd aloud, and spared not, who lifted up their voices like a trumpet, and rebuked his people their transgressions. and the house of Jacob their sins.*

Is. lviii. 1. True their exhortations had generally but little effect, but we know by the records that are left how forcible and pungent the word of God in their mouths was. They remain as a testimony for God that a prophet had been among them. When prophecy ceased, and the state of the world required more effectual means of light and instruction, the blessed Jesus came into the world, calling sinners to repentance; and inviting them into that kingdom of grace which he came to erect among men; and when he was no more in the world, but ascended on high, he gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers to carry on the same design. By means of the stated instruction in the christian church, the favor of divine things, and sense of religion that is diffused by the spread of the gospel in the world, God has always provided that there shall be some at least who will endeavour to give warning to mankind, to turn
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sinners from the terror of their way, and save souls from death. And when these fail, or, all their calls are ineffectual, God takes the work into his own hands, and (as at this time) by terrible things in righteousness he warns and speaks to a careless world.

IV. I suppose that, by whatsoever way or means God gives instructions and warnings to mankind, it becomes all concerned to attend seriously to them. Lot spoke to his family with great earnestness, he spoke like a man who believed there would be such a destruction come upon Sodom as to destroy them off; and, it was their concern to have attended to him with a seriousness equal to that with which he spoke. It was not a vain thing, it was their life. And with equal seriousness should the concerns of religion and an everlasting state be attended to, when with relation to them any advices and warnings are given. The concerns of religion and a future well-being are of all things the most serious. And what makes them so are these two characters.

1. They are things of the most undoubted truth. If true, they are of the greatest moment and importance.

2. They are things of the most undoubted truth. Did angels give notice to Lot of the

the approaching destruction of Sodom? With regard to the moral accountability of man, the immortality of the soul, a future state of retribution, and every thing in which religion has any concern, more than angels have born their testimony to this, and given a full certainty to the things which are commonly believed among us: Besides trains of miraculous appearances of God through every age, all tending in this one point, to prove the truth and reality of religion; in this last age of the world Jesus the Son of God hath appeared among men; his whole mission was employed in leading us into the way of religion, and supposes there is such a thing:—That we have immortal souls, for he died to save them.—That there is a future state of happiness and misery, for he came to deliver us from the wrath to come, and to open the kingdom of heaven for all that believe in him.—That we ought to walk so as to please God, because he hath left us his divine instructions, and his own perfect example to teach us how to do it. But besides all these external evidences of the reality of religion, it has an inward witness in the breast of every man. There is an heart-written law of God, which the most wishful infidelity can never obliterate; and that is the reason why professed unbelievers, to the eternal scandal of all their principles, have generally had such

such bodings and fears, when they have come to make the grand experiment, and have found themselves entering into the unseen state.

2. Another character of the concerns of religion is, that they are things of the greatest importance. As, to be sure, if there is *any* thing in them there is *every* thing: For they are conversant about the whole of our happiness to all eternity. And therefore whatever counsels or warnings are given to mankind with regard to these concerns, it must be beyond all dispute that they ought to be seriously attended to. *Levity here would be perfect madness.*

V. Important and serious as these concerns are, tis but too common for those to whose attention they are proposed, to treat them slightly. So the sons in law of Lot treated the account he gave them of Sodom's approaching destruction: His words express great warmth and vehemence, and no doubt his accent and manner of speaking them was suitable to the weight of the matter. *But he seemed to them as one that mocked.* He was serious, but they laught at him: a picture this of the manner in which all tydings from heaven, and all accounts about religious concerns are very often treated by mankind. There have been scoffers in all ages; but, I believe, the highest malignity
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of this character is the scandal of our own, and that in which we exceed all former times.

Talk to some of the essential differences between good and evil, the accountableness of men to God, and the retributions of a future world, we seem to them as people that *mocked*: They do not think there is a word of truth in all these things; their mighty wisdom has found out that they are only tales of the nursery, and the prejudices of education: The soul is nothing but a peculiar modification of matter; heaven and hell are only dreams, and the Gospel merely a *cunningly devised fable*. They laugh at the credulity of those who believe these things, and think it a great stretch of charity to suppose that those who talk them to the world are not at the bottom as great unbelievers in them as themselves.

Go to others, who profess to have a regard for religion as a matter of truth, and what ought not by any means to be quite neglected; talk to them of its spirituality and great extent; tell them that all sin must be avoided, and all appearance of evil abstained from; that they must attend the worship of God, and live a life of habitual devotion; be exact in their walk, holy in all manner of conversation; be sober, pure, mortified to this present world, and abound in all the fruits of righteousness—you seem as one
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that *mocked*: They do not understand why there should be all this severity and preciseness: They know religion better than those who dress it up in such a gloomy form: "Is not God a merciful Being, and what is the use of mercy if there are no sins for mercy to overlook?" They are under the grace of the gospel, and they understand their christian liberty better than to be led with so strict a rein. Once more

Go to others; to the man of pleasure, to the man of business, or to the young man rejoicing in his youth; tell any of these the weight and moment of eternal things, and withall their nearness; life being so precarious, death at the door, which is to be followed by an awful judgment,——you seem to *them* as one that *mocked*: They can none of them deny the thing itself to be right; but why, say they, should there be so much *haste* and *hurry*? Let me, says the man of the world, first make up my sum; let me, says the man of pleasure, finish this excursion; *let my heart cheer me in the days of my youth*, says he who has youth and many days in prospect; and surely, say they all, we have ~~time~~ enough for this;——then we will take your good advice: Then I will take up and be sober, says the debauchee; then will I become an honest man says the sharpening knave of business; and then, says the covetous man, will I try if I

cannot do one deed of charity; till then they all desire to be excused, and you seem to *mock them* in counselling them to act a better part.

In these ways, and many more that might be thought of, bad men slight the warnings that are given them; some laugh quite out whenever they are talked to with any seriousness; but there is a secret air of cunning in all sin; All finners treat those who give them warning as though they thought there was a design to mock and make fools of them; but the truth of the case is, they only impose on and make fools of themselves: Which leads me to the

Vith. and last observation from the words, which is, that those who slight the serious advice which by any means or instruments God is pleased to give them, will find the neglect to end ruinously for themselves: as truly so as Lot's sons in law, slighting his well-meant warning did for them; who slighting his friendly advice perished in the rain of fire and brimstone from heaven which came upon that city.

Religion is a thing suited to the original structure and all the great principles of human nature: 'Tis so agreeable to truth and nature that if these words are rightly understood, it is nothing else. Let me ask you, whether it is not natural that you should
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honour and love your parents, who under God were the authors of your beings, and who have endeared themselves to you by the numberless offices and cares to which their concern for you has prompted them? Is it not suitable to your character and to theirs, to your natural subordination to them, that you should obey them? when you have so much reason, especially, to believe that their authority is exerted in subserviency to your advantage? And is it not as natural (properly speaking) for reasonable creatures to love and obey their heavenly father? especially when all his requirements are agreeable to the place they hold in the world, to their subordination to himself, the great Father and Lord of all, and are adapted to promote their own happiness, as well as that of all other beings with whom they are or may be connected? Above all, have they not the greatest of all motives to this when they have such encouragement to hope that after having fulfilled their short day of love and humble duty in this world, he designs to remove them to endless felicity and perfection in another? The strongest undoubtedly that can be conceived of. The greatest difficulty that can lie on men in the present state, I should think, should be, to be able to believe that God can be so very gracious as to design for them so great an happiness as they are encouraged to hope for; but even this
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Difficulty is lost and swallowed up in the infinite benignity of the divine nature; and especially in the riches of his grace by Jesus Christ; when we know not *what to say to these*, this gives a full solution and answer, *He that spared not his own Son, but hath given him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things.* Rom. viii. 31, 32. But then all this is not what the sons of men are forced into. They may counter-act the force of conscience, be ungratefully and unnaturally undutiful to their good God, and heavenly Father; do the world and themselves mischief, if they will, and lose the crown of immortality which God has put within their reach. God, to bring them, when they wander, to repentance and a better mind, gives them many warnings; to the stated warnings of his word, and their own consciences, occasionally adds those of private and domestic afflictions; sometimes in an extraordinary way warns them by pestilences, wars, and earthquakes that destroy their ten thousands, and those who are no greater sinners than themselves. And yet 'tis often found, that all is to no purpose: When now God thus calls and men *will not hear, when he stretcheth out his hand, and no man regardeth, what can the Almighty do with such people? what is this chaff good for but to be cast into the fire?* When this obstinacy and contempt

tempt of God is general, we know what he may do, by what he did by Sodom and Gomorrah; and such things wicked cities and nations have reason to look for every day. With regard to individuals, he has told us what he will do; in this world he seldom punishes them in any proportion to the demerit of their sins; on the other hand the wicked may be in great power and his way prosper; but this he has threatened he will do; there is an hereafter, there is an invisible world into which death dismisseth all: There is a region in that world (those who can dare it ought to be told of it) where *the smook of the torment ascendeth up for ever, where the worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched*; and when such little creatures as men can rise up against the eternal God; when those to whom God is so very good, can be so very ungrateful, and especially when they can neglect *so great salvation*, and slight the prize of eternal life which he has offered them; his awful justice in assigning them to the DAMNATION OF HELL is fully vindicated.

I have now finished the observations suggested to my mind by the words in their connexion with the history; and what remains is to endeavour to close with such application as will suit the design of this day's assembling; which, in the words of the royal proclamation, is *to implore a blessing from*

from Almighty God upon his Majesty's fleets and armies, in the present important situation of publick affairs, as also for the humbling ourselves before Him in a deep sense of his late visitation by a most dreadful and extensive earthquake, more particularly felt in some neighbouring kingdoms in friendship and alliance with us, and in some degree by ourselves; and in order to obtain pardon of our crying sins, to the averting of his judgments; and for the continuance of his mercy in the support of the protestant religion and our liberties, in the prosperity of our country, and in the wellfare of the King and the Royal Family,

As the history I have been opening is that of a very awful vengeance brought on the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, and these are set forth as an EXAMPLE; I hoped, it would not be an improper instance to be held up before the eyes of such a sinful and such a threatened nation as, by the solemn work of this day, we acknowledge ourselves to be. The great God still governs the world, and looks down on the children of men, as he did on Sodom; and He that destroyed that city for her sins, is displeased with us for our's, and the calamities with which He threatens are designed to signify to us that He is so.

Let none think, that I mean any comparison between Sodom that was destroyed, and the city which has lately suffered so much

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though that place has felt the severest effects of this judgment, many others have been visited by it too, *it has been felt in some degree by ourselves*; instead therefore of presumptuously measuring the proportion of guilt by the proportion of calamity that has been suffered by one or by another, our only work is to humble ourselves before God, in order to obtain the pardon of our crying sins, and the averting the judgments which we are threatened with.

The dreadful end of Sodom and Gomorrah leads us to many thoughts proper for such a day as this: What the Scriptures have recorded concerning the fine situation and plentiful soil of these cities, and the country round about them, naturally brings to mind our own national advantages in these respects; we too *are fruitful, well watered every where, even as the garden of the Lord*; God has happily thrown his own wall of waters round about us every where for our defence; and, what is not the produce of our soil and climate, Commerce, the child of liberty, and which makes the whole world our own, readily imports and brings in.—And O now that I could stop here, and be able to trace the parallel no further! but who, that reads the account of Sodom's sins, the PRIDE, FULLNESS OF BREAD and ABUNDANCE OF IDLENESS which was in Sodom and her daughters, HER

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HAUGHTINESS and COMMITTING ABOMINATIONS— has not his thoughts directly carried into the vices of our modern times? Who can help thinking — of MIDNIGHT MASQUERADES; secret assignations for GAMING; ROUTS, RIOTS, and other diversions of strange names, names contrived as one would think, to insult all decency; names too of follies in which the DAUGHTERS OF BRITAIN are observed even to take the lead? Who can help thinking — of our luxury in dress and high expensive living — of our lewdness, which is so open, so avowed by many, and even boasted of as a *comparative virtue*; — lastly, of the *unnatural* vices, which are more practised than sober people can well conceive of; vices, till lately, strangers to our colder climate, and which are the abomination of God and man: Are decorum and order necessary to the well being of society? Do vices of the kind I have mentioned, waste the strength, impair the spirit, and root out the vitals of any nation? They certainly do: If therefore, these are the iniquities of England and of London, it is breaking its own constitution, and, without fire from heaven or earthquakes from under the ground, it must die of itself: Above all, if there's a righteous God in Heaven, the cry of such sins must come up before him, and for *these things* He will visit; and we must be beyond con-

ception stupid, if with what has fallen out so lately abroad, and in the uncertain tottering state of every thing among us, we do not consider ourselves under a divine visitation for our sins.

With regard to the war we seem on the brink of, it is true the occasion of that is the ambitious views of those *who delight in war*, and make our part, (which is on'y that of self-defence) necessary: but even this is ultimately the work of God. *The rod of his anger, and the staff of his indignation*, to correct and punish a people who need to be corrected and deserve to be punished by it.

With regard to earthquakes, the impression and terror of which is another thing that hath brought us together this day; I will not suppose I am speaking to any who will deny the hand of God to be in these eminently; there are no doubt secret causes in nature to the immediate operation of which they are to be ascribed; but all these are only second causes acting under the direction of the great and first cause of all things.

Assuming this then as a truth, I would observe, that though the standing advantages God has vouchsafed to mankind, such as the light and dictates of conscience, the ordinary courses of things in Providence, and the noble means of grace in the gospel, are sufficient to lead them to seek after God, yet it is often found that amidst them all
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men grow regardless of him ; because God in providence proceeds in a regular course of administration, too many most absurdly doubt whether there is any providential government at all ; the great truths of the gospel, by being long known and often repeated, tire upon the mind and lose their influence, and the common dictates of conscience come in time to be little attended to : The truth of all this is bitterly felt in the corruption and degeneracy of the christian world under all its great advantages.

In such a state of things now, tis an instance both of the wisdom and goodness of God, to *arise and shew himself*, that he may rouse and awaken a sleepy careless world. *Is it not time for God to work when men have made void his law ?* And if in such circumstances the Almighty is pleased to *do a new thing upon earth* (as was said of the judgment of God on Corah, Dathan and Abiram Lev. xvi. 29. *who did not die the common death of all men, and were not visited after the visitation of all men ; for the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, and all the men that appertained to them ; they went down alive into the pit, and the earth closed upon them, and they perished from among the congregation*) If, I say, God *does a new thing upon the earth*, all that are wise and observe things

things must acknowledge that he takes a proper method of asserting himself, of declaring his power and justice, and his displeasure at the sins of men; such a new thing he has now done in the earthquake in Lisbon and Morocco, and the convulsions by which half the globe, to the great terror of its inhabitants has been shaken since.

What now is the end of God in all these things? Has not *his rod a voice crying to the city*, and to the land? it certainly has, and the *men of wisdom will bear his name*. 'Tis possible there may be some among us to whom we may seem as people *that mock*, and who inwardly laugh at this our fasting and humiliation, treating it as a solemn farce; but there are persons whom nothing but their own feelings will awaken, and, to any good purposes, hardly these. The once opulent city of Lisbon is laid in ruins, the earth is still heaving, as it were, under our feet, and some places in our own country have had their shocks. We are on the brink of a war, and called upon by our good king to beg the divine blessing upon his fleets and armies: War, whatever may be its final event and issue, is a dreadful evil: In all probability it may be attended, among us, with an invasion of the kingdom, and a rebellion among ourselves; and what the consequences of this may be who can tell?

The

The wounds of the last rebellion are hardly healed.

The voice of these *earthquakes* in particular is an alarm to the whole european world; for, more or less, all Europe has felt them: I think they may be considered as the frown of providence upon that restless ambition which has thrown this part of the globe into its present military commotion both by sea and land. 'Tis methinks, the voice of God from *under* the ground to all who are fomenting wars *upon* it, and speaks in this sort of language, "Who are you
 " that are so intent on increasing territory
 " and dominion; and want to give law to
 " the world? *The earth is mine, so is the*
 " *great and wide sea.* Do you not see how
 " easily I can put an end to all your pre-
 " tensions, by reducing the whole object of
 " your struggles to a mixed choas? Do you
 " boast of your artillery and skill in mines
 " and sieges? See what I can do when I
 " lay my siege to your flourishing cities;
 " what a heap of rubbish I can make them,
 " in a few hours."

But to come down from such wide and extensive views to things of a more private and personal concern. While God has been alarming us all, he has sent his desolating judgments on one trading city with which ours had great and interesting connexions:

[May

May the survivors of Lisbon's fall have grace to improve the hand of God upon them to all the good ends to which it is improveable; and may London be warned by her sister city's fate; and repent of all her sins. May that city's fall lead us into a lively conviction of the instability of all worldly dependencies: You see there is no proper *realizing* of any thing in this World. *We have no continuing city here*, and therefore should be earnest in *seeking one to come*; the city which bath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Go to now, ye that say, to day or to morrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell and get gain: whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. Jam. iv. 13, 14. In how few hours was that city, its wealth, and the owners of that wealth buried in one common ruin? My friends, if we will be wise, we shall endeavour to make sure of something of which we can have a firmer tenure, than we have of any thing in this life, or than we can have of life itself; and such a thing is to had if we will seek after it; *enduring substance*, beyond the reach of accidents, and immovable as the throne of God himself: This a gracious God offers through his dear Son to all who commit themselves to his conduct, and are willing to be his disciples: And can we hesitate one moment

moment whether we will make this world, or another, the matter of our choice, supreme affection and warmest pursuit? Such a shock as we are now thinking of, should determine that question for us for ever, and command us *not to look at the things which are seen which are temporal, but at things which are not seen and which are eternal.*

To draw towards a close of all; it may answer the purposes of this day's assembling if you will review some of the observations I made on the text, with an application to yourselves; and when I have assisted you to do this I will conclude.

As you have heard that all sin is displeasing to almighty God, think of this with application to yourselves; and may it be a warning to you against all sin, and that especially which *easily besets you.* May God help every one of us this day to make inquisition for his own sins, and whatever they may be, to make a sacrifice of them to our hopes of having the evils we are afraid of, averted, and obtaining the blessings we pray and wish for.

You have heard that God is not speedy in executing his deserved wrath. His forbearance of this our sinful land is an evidence of this; and who of us is not an evidence of it, in one degree or other? Have we not all reason to admire the patience of God in

preventing the just and deserved consequences of our many transgressions and follies?

Let us remember lastly with application to ourselves how much tis the concern of men to attend with seriousness to all the warnings God is pleased to give them. Whenever God has a voice we should have an ear to hear. If indeed God never speaks, and those who talk to you about your duty your danger, and the way of being safe and happy, talk nothing to the purpose, treat them as credulous fools, or designing knaves; but if they know what they speak, and speak because they love you, and there is that reality in religious concerns, with a sense of which they would impress you, conjure your souls to attend to them as you ought to do: 'Tis not a time for levity and sport when the soul, and the prize of a blessed eternity is at hazard: I think that God, by the calamities with which he hath visited other nations, and may visit this, brings death and the unseen world directly within our view and notice: what can do this if the thought of so many thousands of our fellow creatures laughing all at once into eternity will not?

To conclude all: The work of this day is a national repentance and humiliation; and sure never had a nation a louder call to
this

this than we, if we consider the complicated danger we are in, and the great mercy of God towards us, in yet leaving us when he has taken others. May his goodness lead us to repentance. The nation is now on its knees before God, in all the decent appearances of devotion; but tis proper that we should be put in mind that the fast which God hath chosen and likes, is not to be only the work of a day, but lies in breaking off from all our sins. If we do not carry the business of the day into this extent, all we are now about is only a solemn mocking of God, and provokes the wrath it was designed to deprecate. *Hear the word of the Lord ye rulers of SODOM; give ear to the law of your God ye people of SOMORRAH. To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me, saith the Lord, I am full of the burnt-offerings of rams and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he-goats. When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hands to tread my courts? Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination to me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies I cannot away with: It is iniquity even the solemn meeting. Four new moons and your appointed feasts my soul hateth: They are a trouble to me, I am weary to bear them. And when you spread forth your hands, I will*

hide mine eyes from you : Yea when ye make many prayers I will not hear : Your hands are full of blood. Wash ye, make you clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil, learn to do well, seek judgment, relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow. Come now and let us reason together, saith the Lord : Tho' your sins be as scarlet, they shall be white as snow, tho' they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool. If ye be willing and obedient ye shall eat the good of the land : But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword : For the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it. *Is. i. 10—21.*

And yet there is one thing may be foreseen without any spirit of prophecy. This is a day of general devotion : but what will to morrow, what will next week be ? Will not the miser return again to his bags, the drunkard to his bottle, and the man of pleasure to his——pleasure ? and every sinner to his choice and chosen sin ? Will the houses of vain amusement be after this more thin, and the house of God more full ? I am afraid not. As it was in the days of Lot, men will be eating and drinking, buying and selling, building and planting, *Luke xvii. 28.* and the way of providing for an everlasting state as little thought of as the destruction of the city by fire from heaven was, by the people

people of Sodom. There are some whom no tokens will make afraid.

As for ourselves, Let us endeavour to make the true use of all these things; and I pray to God BRITAIN may remember, that if after such warnings and such sparing goodness as God has vouchsafed to us, we do not repent and amend our ways, it will be *more tolerable in the day of judgment for Sodom and Gomorrah than for us.* May God give us all grace to shun the vices of the times we live in, and *save ourselves from this untoward generation.* By there being among us some persons of singular unaffected piety, like Lots in Sodom, the calamities may be prevented which might otherwise fall upon the nation; if not, good men may be preserved in a time of general destruction; or, if they should suffer with a sinful world, they shall not be condemned with it; but when *the wicked go away into everlasting punishment, they shall enter into that life eternal which is the gift of God through Jesus Christ our Lord.*

F I N I S.



An H Y M N,

By a young Lady.

I.

WHEN Abram fill'd with holy fear,
Before Jehovah stood,
And with an humble fervent pray'r
For guilty Sodom su'd.

II.

With what success, what wond'rous grace
Was his petition crown'd?
The Lord would spare if in the place
Ten righteous men were found.

III.

And could a single holy soul
Such wond'rous grace obtain?
And shall, O God! a nation plead,
And plead with thee in vain?

IV.

Britain, all-guilty as she is,
Some holy souls may boast;
See! their united pray'rs ascend,
And shall these pray'rs be lost?

V. Are

V.

Are not the righteous dear to Thee
Now as in ancient times?
Or doth this sinful land exceed
Gomorrhah in her crimes?

VI.

Lord! we are thine, we bear thy name,
Here yet is thine abode;
Long has thy presence blest our land,
Forfake us not, O God.

VII.

Dread Lord! let not thine anger burn
If we thy suppliants bow,
And say, till thou vouchsafe thy grace
We will not let thee go.

VIII.

Oh may the people, prince and priest
Thy saving mercy share,
And know thee by that glorious name
The God that heareth pray'r.

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